



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 999- Certified Nursing Assistants - Licensing Requirements and Administrative Updates

Position: *Support*
March 1, 2024
Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 999.

Maryland hospitals report a 10.5% vacancy rate for nursing assistant positions. To address the ongoing shortage and high demand for certified nursing assistants (CNA), MHA worked with the Board of Nursing to create a standard curriculum for an acute care CNA pathway based on the Board's basic nursing assistant curriculum, which aligns with federal requirements. Hospital acute care CNA training programs are only for employees. This creates a natural upskilling pathway for non-clinical staff to obtain a nursing license.

SB 999 removes the distinction between CNAs and geriatric nursing assistants (GNA). Currently, to work in a nursing home an individual must obtain a CNA certification and pass the national exam before the Board will issue a GNA certification. Under SB 999, one certification would be utilized across health care settings. This is optimal and common in other states.

MHA and our members support the sponsor's amendments to SB 999 and appreciate the collaboration with the Board of Nursing. The amendments address the hospital field's previous concerns with acute care CNA training programs complying with all federal requirements—primarily that CNA program instructors have at least one year of experience in long-term care. As written, the bill allows graduates of acute care CNA training programs to be eligible to take the national exam. This change will ensure all graduates of CNA programs take the same exam.

The bill also allows nursing students, after completing a portion of their training, to work as nursing assistants without a certification. Many times, qualified nursing students must wait for certification to work. This change could encourage nursing students to work in this capacity, helping them gain additional clinical experience while in nursing school, alleviate the CNA workforce shortage, and provide much needed support to the nursing workforce.

For all of these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on SB 999.

For more information, please contact:
Jane Krienke, Senior Legislative Analyst, Government Affairs